

Culford, West Stow and Wordwell Parish Council

MINUTES

of the Meeting held at Culford Village Hall on

Thursday 24th September 2020

Present: Councillors: Joy Childs (Chair), David Fisher, Paul Luke, Myrtle McQueen, Bruce Murdoch and Rachael Salt.

In attendance: Maximilian Clay (Clerk to the Council)
Three members of the public

7. Apologies

All councillors were present so there were no apologies.

8. Declarations of Interest

- a. There were no declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items on the agenda.
- b. There were no declarations of Other Disclosable Interests in items on the agenda.

9. Minutes

- a. The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2020 were agreed to be a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them as such on behalf of the Council.
- b. The Minutes of the Financial and Annual return Matters agreed virtually on 28th July 2020 were agreed to be a true record and the Chair was authorised to sign them as such on behalf of the Council.

10. District and County Councillor Reports

- a. District Councillor Glossop had submitted apologies and a written report to the meeting. This was received and discussed briefly.
- b. County Councillor Hopfensperger had submitted apologies.

11. Public Forum

Mr Julian Johnson-Munday, headmaster of Culford School spoke at some length about steps to control access to Culford Park by the installation of electronic barriers. He felt that there had been misunderstanding and possibly misrepresentation about the barriers.

With regard to the kissing gate that the school had placed across the entrance to the public footpath at the West Stow entrance, he stated that the school had made an error but that there were no plans to remove it. He added that the school intended to make an application for permission for the gate soon.

Mr Johnson-Munday went on to say that he believes that serious problems are created by inappropriate use of Park, such as dogs being out of control, dog fouling that is not cleared up by owners, and many incidences of people straying off the public and permissive paths.

He felt that 85% of the problems arise from people visiting the park from beyond the immediate neighbourhood, that another 14% of the problems were contributed by regular visitors who should know better (he felt that both these types of visitor gain vehicular access to the Park) and that less than 1% are caused by the local community. He said that there were some persistent offenders.

He explained that the permissive path network had been put in place with the intention of encouraging people away from the main Park (and therefore away from most school-related activities) but that some of these are nonetheless used by pupils, for example for cross country running. Bins are provided for dog excrement and cost the school £5,000 per year to empty but are still not reliably used by all dog-walkers.

Mr Johnson-Munday told the meeting that the school governors were looking at the question of permissive paths at an imminent meeting and that they would need to decide whether or not to

continue the scheme for another 5 to 10 years. He felt that the proposed electronic barriers were essential and that if installed they would not interfere with walkers.

Turning to other objections that had been made to the installation of the barriers he felt that queues onto the road would not occur as the school would take action to ensure that they did not and that barriers would help security at the church. He also stated that visitors who need to drive into the park (for example wheelchair users) would be put into the electronic system so that the barriers would open for them.

Mr Johnson-Munday mentioned that the school supports St Mary's with heating, electricity and cleaning costs but that it would not return to using the church after lockdown. He also contended that there is no public vehicular access to St Mary's.

Another member of the public spoke to highlight the illegality of the kissing gate at the western end of the public footpath across Culford Park and the problems that it causes. The gate is very restrictive, especially for those with mobility problems – such people are being denied their right to follow the footpath. Further, he argued that access to the footpath through the park helped with sustainability issues and supports both mental and physical health. He would like to see action taken to remove the kissing gate at the earliest opportunity.

(See discussion under item 15)

12. Clerk's Report & Administrative Business

- a. There were no decisions taken under delegated powers since the last meeting.
- b. i The Clerk reported that Bank statements were still not being delivered correctly – he will continue to try to get the bank to respond appropriately.
- ii The three grants of £500 each to the Village Hall, and Culford and West Stow churches that had been informally agreed previously needed to be formally agreed. The Council resolved to make these grants. Cheques would be issued at the next meeting.
- iii It was resolved to buy replacement batteries for the VAS at a cost of £167.50 plus VAT.

13. To Consider Co-opting Mr Paul Turnill to the Council

Members had considered the information submitted by Mr Turnill and unanimously resolved to co-opt him.

14. Planning & Environment

- a. Planning Applications:
 - i **DC/20/1235/HH - The Water Tower, Brandon Road, Culford:** Two storey rear extension with terrace on second storey, including ground floor annexe accommodation. After brief discussion it was agreed that the application raised no problematic issues and that the Council would therefore support it.
 - ii **DC/20/1399/TPO 2 Cornwallis Close West Stow:** TPO 098 (1968) Tree Preservation Order -
 - (i) 1no. Oak (T1 on plan and order) - overall crown reduction by up to 4 metres. The Council resolved to make no objections.
- b. There were no updates on previous applications.
- c. There were no other planning updates but a query was raised about the windows on the north side of Fieldgate Cottage as these had not formed part of the application. The Clerk will check this and report back to the next meeting, having taken any necessary action in the meantime.
- d. **Fly-tipping of Garden Waste on the 'Triangle' at West Stow** – Garden waste is being dumped regularly. After discussion of the issues it was resolved to write to nearby residents explaining that this is illegal and the consequences of continued tipping. This was felt preferable to moving straight to enforcement which would have to be the next step if the problem persists.

15. Public Rights of Way Problems

The Council discussed the partial blocking by Culford School of the Public Right of Way across Culford Park at the West Stow Church entry. The council expressed regret that the School had not been willing to meet the Clerk to discuss this, and other issues, despite several invitations to do so. It was also felt unfortunate that the Headmaster, having chosen instead to address the Council, had not

stayed to hear this part of the meeting.

In discussion, it was agreed that Culford School should be setting a good example rather than breaking the law and it was felt that, as the Headmaster now acknowledged that the erection of the kissing gate had been an error, it should be removed. If the School then wished to apply for permission to erect a gate it could do so, although the granting of permission would be highly unlikely in the context of current frameworks relating to Public Rights of way.

Given the unwillingness of the School's senior staff to engage in discussion it was agreed that the Council would write to the Governors to clarify the position and express its views. In the meantime the Clerk would also continue to chase the PROW enforcement team.

16. Lorries in West Stow

The Council received a report concerning the volume and speed of, and damage caused by, lorries using the lanes in West Stow. A large number of complaints from residents had been received. Given that the Parish Council cannot take action in relation to highways matters, it was agreed to write to the SCC cabinet member for Highways to explain the situation and seek support for investigating what could be done to address these problems.

In response to a question about SpeedWatch it was noted that the Council had agreed to advertise to see whether there would be sufficient volunteers to make a scheme viable. However, the pandemic had intervened and it had been felt unhelpful to try to seek volunteers until it would be possible to follow up with training if they came forward.

17. Wildlife Friendly Village

The Council considered a report and proposal for making the Parish Wildlife Friendly villages. There was enthusiasm for the idea and it was agreed to take it forward. It was resolved to delegate Cllr Salt with the task of taking the project forward by seeking to establish a group of volunteers and local coordinators and to allocate £250 as initial funding for the project.

18. Governance & Financial Matters

a. Protocol for dealing with planning applications that arrive outside the Councils cycle of meetings: The proposed protocol is a way of overcoming the need to call extra meetings when non-controversial proposals planning applications arise outside the cycle of normal meetings. Under the protocol, if Councillors agree in each case, matters would be dealt with by the Clerk following consultation with Members. In some cases it will still be necessary to call a meeting, for example, because a particular proposal is highly contentious or complex. The Council considered and discussed the protocol and resolved to adopt it.

b. The schedule of receipts and payments was received and it was resolved to approve the payments.

19. Councillors' reports and items for future agendas

It was noted that the verges were being used for parking which was causing damage. An eye would be kept on this.

The Chair declared the meeting closed at 9.30pm

Signed as a true record by authority of the Council

Chair

Date